

# LORAIN TORNADO

LORAIN, OHIO, JUNE 28, 1924

OFFICIAL SOUVENIR AND  
MEMORIAL BOOK









# LORAIN TORNADO

## SOUVENIR AND MEMORIAL BOOK

### OFFICIAL BOOK

All details of word and pictures in this book have been approved  
and pronounced authentic by

GEORGE HOFFMAN,  
MAYOR OF LORAIN

Published by  
RUDY MOC AND TEX DEWEESE  
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**A portion of the profit from the  
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## INTRODUCTORY

**S**WIFT and portentous events marked the first half of 1924 both in the United States and abroad. If a forecast may be made from past and present happenings of the year, it would appear there are still storms ahead.

It is to be hoped, however, the period of stress has been passed and an era of brighter days will come.

Merciless have been the elements to all humanity at large. Especially was ruthless destruction visited upon Lorain in the Northern Ohio Tornado.

And science, despite her wondrous march to a point where she stands awe-struck at her own disclosures of the marvels of Nature, finds herself still helpless and still unable to rule the elements of Air, Fire and Water.

Yet, science has pointed proudly to her achievements, to prove her sovereignty over these same elements.

It is true that science has, to a degree, made Air, Fire and Water our servants, but "lest we forget," we are taught now and again that science is not omnipotent and that our servants may become our masters.

One of these stern lessons was given to us on the

afternoon of Saturday, June 28, 1924, when the City of Lorain was devastated by a tornado.

At this time Lorain's principal business and residential districts, present a scene of ruin. Shattered remnants of what were once majestic buildings, a confused mass of wreckage, lie piled high in gigantic heaps. All beauty of architecture blotted out, identity lost; and here and there the homes not completely wrecked in the area lashed by the storm, rise out of the chaos.

In the storm-stricken area these homes not totally destroyed stand lonely and dismal. They are in the midst of destruction—mute signals that the ordeal through which they passed was due to causes beyond the knowledge and brain of man.

Lorain passed through many patriotic and jubilant Fourth of July holidays but never was one so gloomy as July 4, 1924, six days after its devastation.

Business was hard hit.

But Lorain's civic life has not been harmed, and though cast down, she looks forward to the period after reconstruction. She will emerge from the darkness and



the shadows will disperse in the glorious light of an evening sun. The city will take on a more beautiful aspect than ever before. From the wreckage of a crippled commercial district will arise one more magnificent.

Nothing can bring back the seventy lives which were taken away when the storm dipped down. It was God's will. But Lorain, for its future sake, will "carry on and on."

The object of this book is to present a word and camera story of The Lorain Tornado as it actually was; to make each reader a spectator.

The story of the disaster, elsewhere in the book, was

written by Tex De Weese, a newspaperman who was in Lorain when the tornado struck, and who paints the picture in words by virtue of experience gained in one of the spots where destruction was greatest.

Photographs were taken by Rudy Moc, a Lorain photographer, who like De Weese was in Lorain when the storm spent its fury. His pictures tell the story where words fail. He was on the job with his camera as soon as it was possible to make headway through the tangled mass of wreckage in the sections laid to waste.

These words and pictures will long be remembered by Lorain and Northern Ohio.





## Death Reached Its Hand Beneath Ruins of These Buildings



SO high was wreckage piled at Mills' Seed Store, Broadway, two days and nights passed before the body of Mrs. Gertrude Mills was found.



WALLS of the State Theater after balconies had crashed through orchestra circle. At the right is the Wickens Co. Bldg., showing destruction.



## Views of Devastation on Broadway, City's Main Street



THE writer of the story in this book sought refuge in the "Arcade" Billiard Parlor, shown here.



THIS shows another view of Lorain's main thoroughfare on the morning following the storm.



## City's Deserted Business Streets Kept Death Toll Down



**W**RECKAGE on sidewalks show what chance of escape pedestrians had who were caught outside.



**S**ALVATION Army canteens fed the workers in the early hours of clearing away debris.



## When Clean-up Crews Began to Clear Away Debris



**A**N early photograph taken on Broadway, looking north from Sixth St. It gives additional evidence of the storm's fury.



**B**RIGHT and early on the morning following the disaster trucks began the huge task of hauling away the wreckage.



# *THE LORAIN TORNADO*

A Complete and Vivid Narrative of Death and Destruction  
in Ohio's Greatest Storm, Written by an Eye-witness  
who Experienced it from Beginning to End.

**A**T 14 minutes after five late in the afternoon of Saturday, June 28, 1924, Lorain, Ohio, with a population of 40,000 people, was a striving, progressive Lake Erie city with a happy and contented citizenry.

Five minutes later—at 5:19 p. m.—it was a mass of tangled ruins with scores dead, hundreds moaning beneath destroyed buildings and homes and still hundreds of others being rushed to areas where emergency attention could be given their injuries.

And in those five minutes of living death and terror, Lorain's principal business and residential districts had been mowed to the ground in property loss aggregating \$35,000,000.

In those merciless five minutes the work of a half hundred years was torn to earth; seventy human lives were snuffed out; and twelve hundred persons were injured, some of them never to recover.

Lorain had been swept by a tornado of wind and rain the like of which had never before struck the northern districts of the United States.

It was a tornado which Henry M. Baker, national director of Red Cross disaster relief, of Washington, D. C., said was the most complete in its destruction of any cyclone or tornado he had ever followed up with relief to refugees and sufferers.

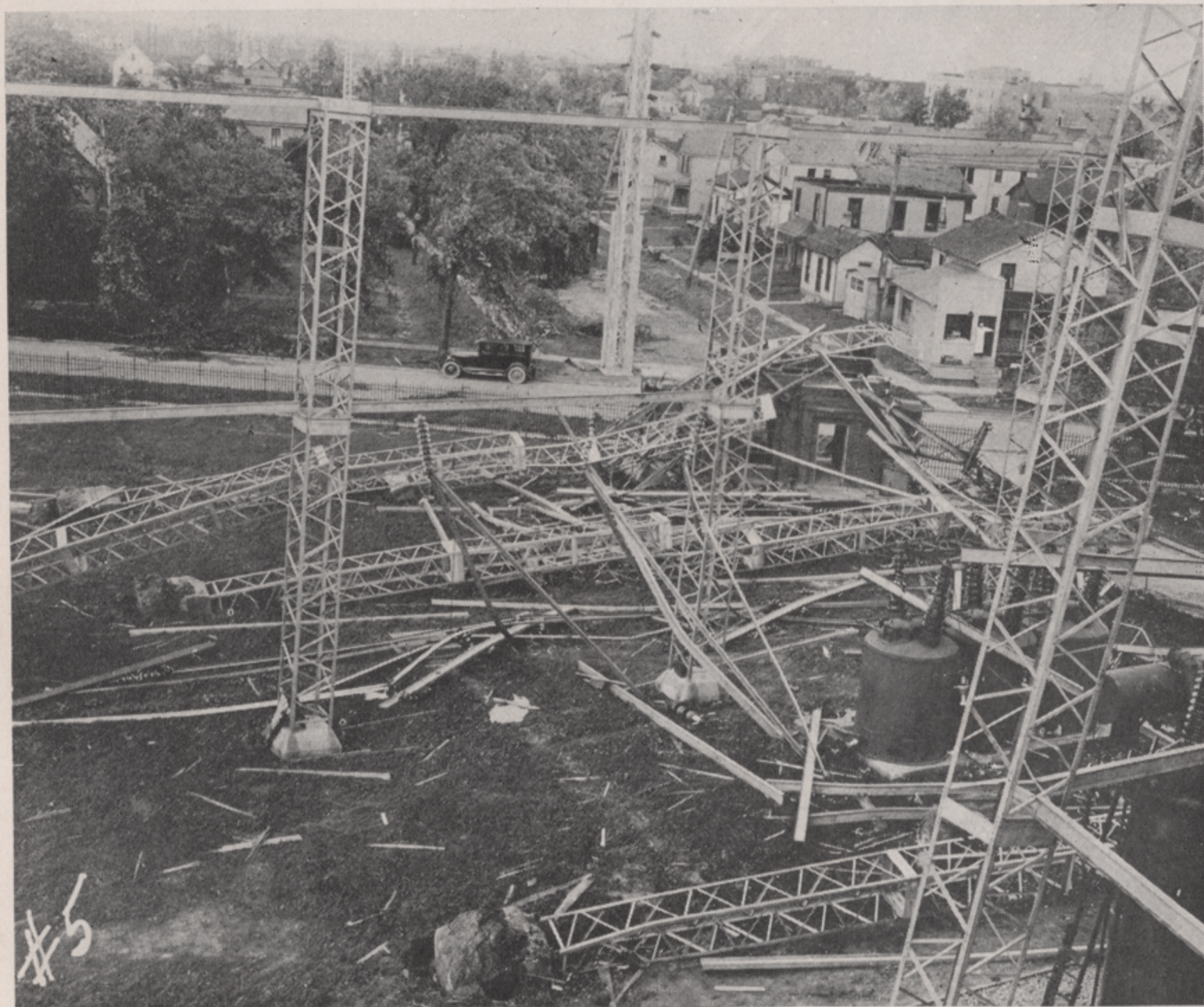
Baker has gone through 87 disasters of a similar character during his many years of service with the Red Cross.

"It is the most complete in destruction I have ever seen," Mr. Baker said upon his arrival in Lorain.

As this is being written, hundreds are still homeless living in tents supplied by the U. S. army, wooden shacks they have constructed from the debris and make-shift huts of all descriptions. They must live there



## Where Tornado Stopped the Wheels of Industry



**T**WISTED mass of structural steel left by storm at Edge-water plant of Ohio Public Service Co.



**D**AMAGE estimated at \$1,000,000 was done to the B. & O. ore bridge on Black River.



until relief comes for the restoration of their homes under the guiding hand of the American Red Cross.

The rich were made poor and all put on a common footing where the tornado's tail lashed its destruction.

Not a building in the downtown business district escaped. Close to 200 business houses were wrecked. Five hundred homes were destroyed and upwards of a thousand more partially destroyed.

Eight churches in the downtown district were either completely or partially destroyed. They included the First Methodist Episcopal, St. Mary's R. C., St. John's Evangelical, Second A. M. E., Church of Redeemer, Emmanuel Evangelical, First Congregational, and the First Church of Christ.

Damage to churches alone is estimated at more than \$1,000,000. Approximately a half million dollars loss was sustained in the city's public school system. The storm struck Central high school, Fairhome, Irving, Brownell, and Charleston buildings. Charleston building was condemned and ordered razed.

Seventy persons were killed and 600 injured in the heaviest toll ever taken by a tornado in this section of the United States.

It had been a hot and sultry afternoon—that Saturday of June 28 and threatening clouds had hung in the sky since noon.

About one o'clock it began to rain but it was short-lived. The sun disappeared not to look on Lorain again until it should see what the storm had claimed.

It was a black sky that bespoke rain, thunder and lightning at most any time. So busy Saturday afternoon shoppers hurried their errands. Three hours and a half of intermittent raining passed and it was 4:30 o'clock.

Then it began to rain harder. Fortunately this sent many others to shelter and hurried them to their homes. By 5 o'clock Broadway, the city's main throughfare and business street, seemed deserted save for many parked automobiles and a few stragglers who sought to run through the downpour. Those who had not gone home had taken refuge in mercantile places, theaters, and restaurants.

At 5:10 p. m. Lorain was in darkness despite the fact night was not scheduled to fall until 8:30 p. m. in this Eastern time zone.

The populace knew there was an impending storm but no one dreamed of the intense, severe and death-dealing disaster about to fall.



## Churches, Opposite One Another, Meet Similar Fate



**T**HE First M. E. Church, Sixth Street and Reid Avenue, was among houses of worship, hard hit in tornado.



**A** WOMAN was practicing an organ recital in the Emanuel Evangelical Church. She was seriously injured.



There were the usual expressions of fear of a severe electrical storm which was believed to be in the offing.

It grew darker and darker.

Five-eleven, five-twelve, five-thirteen and—

At 14 minutes after 5 o'clock the monster of the heavens came lashing and crashing through the city—killing, maiming and wrecking in its path.

The late afternoon turned to inky blackness with electricity and gas off, throwing the city into a veritable midnight of agony.

As it struck there was a deafening rumble, described here as the report of a cannon prolonged for five minutes. There was screaming. Buildings toppled. Thunder roared and lightning flashed.

Human beings were hurled through the streets along with automobiles, horses, telephone poles, trees and wreckage of every conceivable kind.

It was five minutes of hell on earth for Lorain.

One who was not in the midst while it raged can hardly be expected to believe all that might be told about the thousands of things that happened during those five minutes.

Many who went through it will tell you they believed it the Day of Reckoning—accepted their fate, kneeled and prayed in firm belief the end of the world was at hand.

The storm passed through the business district and turned west into the West End residential district, then north to the lake where eye-witnesses who were in the open at Lakeview Park say it met another of equal intensity which was sweeping off the lake. The combined storms then sped back along the lake shore to Lorain's East Side, where the poorer classes lived, and continued its devastation there.

Houses were totally destroyed, killing some and injuring hundreds of others of their occupants. Still other homes were blown blocks away and crashed into kindling wood. Eight churches were totally destroyed.

Automobiles, parked in the streets, were picked up, hurled through the air and dropped again in twisted masses of junk. There was the continual crash of plate glass windows and the rumbling of falling and flying bricks and timber.

The miracle of it all is that more lives were not lost.

Lorain is a "Saturday night" town. Had the disaster visited two hours later it would have caught a crowded



## Complete Destruction in West End Residential Section



**T**HESE homes were completely demolished, crumbled to earth and scattered away.



**T**HIS palatial home stood out in bare relief to fate of others around it.



business district, filled theaters and the loss of life would have run into thousands.

When the fury of it all had subsided enough to permit those who had escaped injury and death to venture out again, a sorry sight was visioned in their eyes.

Hundreds ran into the streets picking their way through the tangled debris that was everywhere. There were moanings, shouts for help and cries of distress from all sides in the darkened streets.

Then there came a dawn before dusk, enough light to permit rescuers to go about their work. During all this time there was a heavy downpour of rain.

Many were the conflicting reports of deaths. Everyone ran wild searching for loved ones from whom they had been separated.

As soon as Lorain could recover from the shock city officials had organized a rescue crew comprised of ex-service men who began the gruesome task of searching for the dead.

A heavy toll of life was taken at the Lakeview Park municipal bath-house on the West Shore where hundreds of bathers had sought refuge from the storm. The building was crumbled to its foundation. Eight bodies

were taken from its ruins. Scores of others were injured there.

Lives were snuffed out at the State theater which crumbled as a crowd of 200 late afternoon theatergoers were rushing for exits. They had been witnessing a performance by a musical stock revue company. All of the performers escaped. Second and third balconies crashed into the orchestra circle, trapping many beneath. Scores of injured were taken out and here again it was a miracle more lives were not claimed. The death toll in the theater was estimated at 15.

Five persons, four of them visitors from Columbus, were killed in the home of Attorney C. E. Van Deusen on West Fifth street.

Two died beneath the ruins of the Crystal Restaurant on Broadway when the second story of living quarters fell through to the basement.

One man was killed sitting at the wheel of his automobile which was parked on Broadway. Others died from being struck by flying bricks and timbers.

More of those in the death list lost their lives in toppling dwelling houses at various places throughout the wrecked regions of the residential districts.

Hundreds of injured were taken from business and





## Rescuers Taking Body From Ruins of State Theater

When this theater completely collapsed it trapped a crowd of late afternoon theater-goers. Estimates of the dead was placed at 15, many others were injured here.



This Shows How  
Storm Left  
Broadway,  
Lorain's Main  
Street

This photograph was taken from the top of the Eagles Building, Sixth Street and Broadway, Lorain, at day-break following the night of the storm. It shows the damage in the principal business district.





## Street Car Picked Up and Tossed From Rails



THIS shows what tornado did to the homes of two of Lorain's City officials.



THIS car was taking more people to Lakeview Beach where many were killed. No one in the car was killed.



dwelling houses and picked up on the streets and rushed to temporary hospitals which were set up that night in school buildings.

Lorain was cut off from the world and first news of the gravity of the disaster was flashed to the outside by an amateur wireless operator whose sending set was not put out of commission by the storm. The message was picked up in Cleveland and doctors and nurses were hurried here aboard a tug. They arrived at 10 o'clock Saturday night.

The Red Cross established an emergency relief hospital in Central high school to care for the injured after St. Joseph's hospital, just outside the devastated area, had been filled to overflowing.

Bodies of the dead also were taken to the school building. Longfellow school building on the East Side was used as a hospital for the East Side injured.

Saturday night was a night of horror spent in searching through ruins beneath the glare of automobile headlights and pocket flash-lamps.

Sunday the city was placed under civic-military control with the arrival of 1,500 troopers from Ohio cities sent to Lorain by Governor Donahey upon the appeal of Mayor George Hoffman.

Their arrival was preceded by that of several hundred Cleveland police and firemen who came Saturday midnight to assist in policing the city to prevent looting and plundering as well as guard financial institutions where large sums of money lay buried in wreckage.

Sunday forenoon the work of clearing debris from the streets began with hundreds of laborers from the National Tube company, city workmen and volunteers taking part.

The Salvation Army played its emergency relief role in supplying food to refugees. Much food and clothing was sent in from the outside world and the appeal for emergency aid was met with a wealthy response throughout Ohio.

Then came the appeal to Governor Donahey for aid. He was told Lorain's property damage was \$35,000,000 and was called upon to ask the nation for help.

But the governor said Ohio could take care of the situation and decided not to make the appeal nationwide in its scope. The Lorain Rehabilitation committee, comprised of 25 Lorain men, decided to make the appeal over his head. Telegrams were dispatched to every corner of the United States and responses came in rapidly. The governor's decision was made after a personal visit through the Lorain ruins, accompanied by the Ohio



## They Ran to Cellar Here and One Was Killed



**O**CCUPANTS in this three-story home retreated to cellar and all escaped miraculously with their lives.



**B**UT in this home, less wrecked than the other, one man was crushed to death in the basement.



Relief Commission, a body of twelve Ohio business men appointed by him to work out Lorain's salvation.

Two weeks after the storm nearly \$500,000 had been placed in the relief fund from Ohio alone.

And as this is written, although the city is still an eyesore of wreckage, reconstruction is under way and every power and force in the community looks to the brighter side with a grim determination to go on and on to a better, bigger and more prosperous city than ever.

## *KILLED IN LORAIN TORNADO*

Mrs. Harriet Adams, 63, Cleveland.

Harry Artin, 35, Opera House block.

Mrs. Eunice Beam, 52, Punxsutawney, Pa.

Mrs. Blanche Berg, 33, 1119 9th St.

Mrs. Catherine Blinzely, 48, 225 14th St.

Joseph Blinzley, 50, 225 14th St.

Mrs. Effie McDonald, 30, Cincinnati, O.

Harold Bouse, 64, 1345 2nd St.

Mrs. Martha Braun, 69, 527 Hamilton Ave.

Evelyn Brown, 11, 552 5th St.

George Csillag, Jr., 10, 909 F St.

John Danyi, 32, 1646 East 29th St.

Mathilda Diedrich, 14 months, 1839 E. 34th St.

John Delesimanvioec, 12, 909 East 32nd St.

Harry Buttle, 35, 558 Brownell Ave.

William Buttle, 15, 558 Brownell Ave.

Mrs. Mary Campbell, 21, 308 7th St.

George Copas, 20, Elyria.

Robert Coulter, 6, 534 Hamilton Ave.

George Csillag, Sr., 40, 909 F St.

Joseph Dina, 2, 409 Delaware Ave.

Louis Foisy, 49, 1045 G St.

Mrs. Margaret Frame, 83, Elyria.

Joseph Garbo, 9, 311 Colorado Ave.



## Where Cars Were Piled High and Houses Went to Splinters



**T**HE freakish twist of the terrific wind deposited this auto on top of another back of Eagles Home.



**T**HIS scene is typical of the storm's ravages in the residential districts of Lorain.



Everett Gant, 35, Webb City Missouri.  
Mrs. Martha Guignette, 32, 411 Idaho Ave.  
George Hamilton, 51, Steubenville.  
Evelyn Hemple, 14, 1185 8th St.  
Mrs. Elizabeth Horvath, 37, 1004 Colorado Ave.  
Professor Jeffreys, 60, Oberlin.  
Clark Keiver, 65, 314 Florida Ave.  
Stephen Kardos, 40, 426 Delaware Ave.  
Stephen Koch, 37, 1680 East 31st St.  
Mary Kodelja, 16, 1709 East 33rd St.  
Mrs. Anna Kroll, 70, 412 Delaware Ave.  
William Kroll, 10, 412 Delaware Ave.  
Dorothy Lalonde, 12, 627 Broadway.  
Karl Lemmerman, 39, Cleveland.  
Harold Lewenstein, 28, Jersey City, New Jersey.  
Mrs. Ellen Meredith, 25, Swissvale, Pa.  
Joseph Michalski, 33, 1215 West 22nd St.  
Stanley Michurski, 25, G St.  
Mrs. Gertrude Mills, 49, 1030 9th St.  
Margaret Mogzis, 9, 401 West 21st St.  
Florence Nickley, 6, 616 Colorado Ave.  
John T. Nolan, 35, 1736 Oberlin Ave.  
Willis Plunkett, 17, 1339 2nd St.

Audrey Pressick, 7, 113 Arizona Ave.  
Albert Rheinsberg, 27, West Erie and Brownell Ave.  
Mrs. Pauline Rheinsberg, 31, West Erie and Brownell Ave.  
Eileen Rhoades, 10, 433 Idaho Ave.  
Mrs. Grace Richards, 38, Columbus.  
Leonard Richards, 5, Columbus.  
Louis Richards, 3, Columbus.  
Ray Richards, 41, Columbus.  
John Shauver, 54, 319 Washington Ave.  
Florence Sheppard, 30, 1010 9th St.  
Mrs. Carrie Smith, 45, Opera House block.  
Mrs. Katie Spekhart, 65, 1117 G St.  
Mrs. Mable Stickrath, 35, 841 G St.  
Charles Stumpp, 28, Vermilion.  
Wilbur Van Deusen, 3, 1128 5th St.  
Steve Vedro, 3219 Camden Ave.  
Bessie Widzer, 12, 1326 Reid Ave.  
Stanley Williams, 34, 1133 6th St.  
Mrs. Mary Witter, 57, 1032 5th St.  
Carlton Woods, 12, 126 East 31st St.  
Edward Wytttenbach, 28, Henrietta.  
Mrs. Gertrude Fisk, 65, 733 Georgia Ave.



## Automoblies Were Blown Away Like So Much Paper



**T**HIS Ford automobile was blown to the top of a building and dropped in a pile of junk.



**H**ERE again are autos shown blown up into yards in the residential districts.



## Wreckage of Homes in Lorain's East Side District



**D**EBRIS of this home was carried a half mile away. Very little was left on the original spot.



**T**HESE East Side people are shown handing their Relief blanks to H. R. Baker, National Red Cross Director.



## Officials View Wrecked Area—Does Family Washing in Ruins



**G**OVERNOR A. V. Donahey of Ohio, and Mayor George Hoffman with members of Ohio Relief Commission tour devastated area.



**T**HOUGH her home was down, this woman salvaged the family wash-tub and found time to wash clothes for her kiddies.



## More Devastation—Ice Truck Dropped in Display Window



**T**HESE homes were totally wrecked. Miracle of miracles saved the lives of those who were inside.



**T**HIS ice truck was blown from a block away into the window of the Ohio Public Service Co.



"There's No Place Like Home, No Matter How Humble"



THIS family remained in their apartment despite the storm's ravages. They could go nowhere else.



AND these people stuck to their home, too. Henry R. Baker, Red Cross Director, is shown visiting needy.



Some of These Homes Reduced to Total Wrecks



**R**ESIDENTS who lived here was forced to take up abode in tents and await Relief.



**W**HILE these Lakeview Blvd. homes did not suffer total wreckage all houses were unroofed and damaged.



## Church Tossed Topsy-Turvy—Supply Canteen Set Up In Ruins



**T**HIS tangled mass of wreckage was left at the corner of Fourth St. and Washington Ave., in the heart of the storm hit area.



**R**ESCUE workers are shown stopping long enough to get a bite to eat before resuming the gruesome task.



When the Heavens Opened Wide These Places Crumbled



THE tower of the First Congregational Church fell and demolished No. 1 Fire Station.



THIS shows the wreckage of the Emanuel Evangelical Church parsonage, next to the wrecked church.



Storm Deals Blow to St. Mary's Church — Searching Ruins for Valuable



**S**T. MARY'S R. C. CHURCH and Rectory at Eight St. and Reid Ave. showing how wind swirled down and scooped tops from both buildings.



**M**EMBERS of the Doing family salvaging wreckage of their home at Fifth St. and Washington Ave., the morning after the storm.







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